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**INVESTIGATING PRIMARY SCHOOL
STUDENTS' HOLISTIC HEALTHCARE
PRACTICES: ENABLERS AND
BARRIERS: A SMALL CASE STUDY
WITH YEAR SIX STUDENTS**

Thesis submitted by

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in March 2012

Master of Education Honours

James Cook University

School of Education

For Primary School and HPE Teachers

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DECLARATION ON ETHICS

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the *National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Human* (1999), the *Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (1997), the *James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics. Standard Practices and Guidelines* (2001), and the *James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (2001). The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (approval number H2360).

Trish Thomas

Date

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS

Primary supervisor Doctor Maree DinanThompson and secondary supervisor Doctor Sharn Rocco provided supervision for this research from James Cook University Townsville. Supervision included guidance with research design, editorial recommendations and general research assistance. I would like to also acknowledge Associate Professor Hilary Whitehouse for her recommendations regarding the structuring and writing of the thesis and Suzy Grinter for editing assistance.

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ABSTRACT

The development of an Australian national Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum is of current interest. The debate over how this curriculum is theoretically structured and embraced by students and teachers is further intensified as educators discuss the changing role of schools to address public health. This small case study investigates the way a holistic healthcare practice program was enacted upon by Year Six students and two teachers in a low socio-economic community in North Queensland, Australia. The study illuminates how the multidimensional environment influences including political, sociocultural, physical and economic, acted as either ‘enablers’ or ‘barriers’ to students engaging in holistic healthcare practices in the students’ lives in the school, home and community context. Data from this small case study highlights issues of governance of HPE curricula and teacher pedagogy as having influence on student engagement. Student data demonstrates that Year Six students see themselves as healthy, choose to enact positive healthcare practices and involve many family and community members including grandparents in their health practices. Data analysis suggests that accepted and fractured assumptions about health education exist and that through student voice a more complex understanding is represented in their engagement with health programs in primary schools.

Key words: Health and Physical Education curriculum; primary school; pedagogy; holistic health.

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